Manage Individuals Individually

Management would be easy if everyone you managed were hard working and collaborative, and had a great attitude and exceptional talent.

The reality is far different. Some people are easy to manage and others are hard. Some are talented but not collaborative. Some are collaborative but not too talented. Some are too aggressive and others not aggressive enough. Some are well-intentioned but moody or easily distracted.

Individuals need to be managed individually. Here are six tips for managing people:

1. **Accept that management is a complex and difficult job**. Recognize that frustrations and difficult situations go with the territory. That's why you're being compensated more than if you weren't in management. Approach delicate employee "issues" positively, like a puzzle to solve.

2. **Don't avoid conflict**. Deal with it directly and evenhandedly. You are going to have to continue working with these same people in the future. It's best to work for fair, constructive resolutions.

3. **Try to see things through the eyes of others**. There may be reasons why a certain person is hard to manage. Has he or she always been this way, or are new external factors contributing? Is there anything in your management style that could be triggering an oppositional response? If you look at a problem holistically and gain insights as to why someone acts the way he or she does, that can lead you to a constructive solution.

4. **Get help when you need it**. Ask someone whose judgment you trust for advice. This could be a human resources contact, a mentor, your own manager or a colleague. It isn't a sign of weakness. It's sensible judgment.

5. **Set clear, measurable job objectives**. It makes evaluating performance more concrete and less vague. When an employee isn't achieving goals, you have something totally tangible to discuss.

Think in terms of assets and liabilities. Does a problematic employee still add real value to the organization? Some of the most brilliant people are difficult to manage but the benefits they bring to the company far outweigh the problems they cause, so they are clearly assets. But if they become so disruptive that their accomplishments are outweighed by the problems they cause, then they are liabilities.

There are no light switches you flip for immediate solutions to employee problems. But certain fundamental approaches can make handling difficult situations easier and can have relevance for employees at all levels.

This story was adapted from the article "6 Tips For Managing People Who Are Hard To Manage" by Victor Lipman published in Forbes *magazine.*

Photo credit: Thinkstock/iStock